



U.S. Department of Justice
United States Attorney
District of Kansas

NEWS RELEASE

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TOPEKA, KANSAS MAN PLEADS TO GUN CHARGE

TOPEKA, Kan. – United States Attorney Eric Melgren announced that **Torrence L. Peppers**, 21, Topeka, Kansas, entered a guilty plea on July 15, 2004, before U.S. District Judge Sam A. Crow to **one count of possessing a firearm during a drug trafficking crime**.

Melgren said that Peppers admitted at his plea that on April 13, 2004, Topeka Police Department officers were called to the intersection of Gage and 29th, Topeka, Kansas, where witnesses described to them that they had observed two black males together and one of the black males had drawn a handgun and was firing at a passing automobile. Based on witness statements, police located and stopped a vehicle leaving a nearby residence believed to be associated with Peppers and Deneco Scales. The automobile was driven by a woman and occupied by her daughter, Scales and Peppers. A search of the car revealed the following firearms: a Beretta .40 caliber semi-automatic handgun, a double-barreled sawed off 20 gauge shotgun, and an Iver Johnson .22 semi-automatic handgun. Peppers further admitted that approximately 2.04 grams (approximately .07 ounce) of crack cocaine, packaged in individual baggies, found during the search, was his. Peppers and Scales were at the payphone when a car driven by an acquaintance drove past, and they thought that acquaintance was going to fire a gun at them. They shot at this acquaintance and then ran to the home and put the guns in the trunk of the car in which they were then arrested. This vehicle was stopped by T.P.D. officers as it left this residence and the firearms were located in the trunk and recovered by T.P.D. crime-scene personnel. Peppers admitted that he possessed the firearms in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime.

Peppers faces a minimum of five years in federal prison without parole. Sentencing is set for October 19, 2004, at 10:00 a.m.

Deneco Scales, 20, Topeka, Kansas, entered a guilty plea on June 24, 2004, to one count of possessing a firearm during a drug trafficking crime. Scales faces a minimum of five years in federal prison without parole. Sentencing is set for September 22, 2004, at 1:30 p.m.

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Melgren commended the excellent work of the Topeka Police Department and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives in this investigation and Assistant U.S. Attorney Greg Hough in this prosecution.